

Message Text

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SUBJ: AMBASSADOR VISITS EQUATORIA PROVINCE

1. SUMMARY. JANUARY 14-18; TRIP EQUATORIA REVEALED NUMBER GROWING PAINS IN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUDANESE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN REGIONAL AUTHORITIES. MOST RETURNED REFUGEES APPARENTLY BEING SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED INTO TRADITIONAL ECONOMY, BUT RETURN MAJOR NUMBER FROM UGANDA IN SPRING LIKELY STRAIN FOOD STOCKS. WHILE REGION HAS CONSIDERABLE LONG-RANGE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL, ENDEMIC HEALTH AND TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS, PLUS IMMEDIATE FUEL SHORTAGES, CLOUD SHORT-TERM OUTLOOK. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCOMPANIED BY SMITH (AF/N) AND EMBOFF PEALE, I PAID FOUR DAY VISIT EQUATORIA PROVINCE JANUARY 14-18. SINCE THIS WAS FIRST VISIT TO SOUTHERN REGIONAL BY US CHIEF OF MISSION SINCE 1967, REGIONAL AUTHORITIES WENT ALL OUT TO PROVIDE CORDIAL RECEPTION AND SHOW US MAXIMUM AMOUNT IN TIME AVAILABLE. IN ADDITION VISITS TORIT, MARIDI, YAMBIO AND NZARA BY PRIVATE PLANE AND DRIVE TO NIMULE BY CAR, WE CALLED ON VICE PRESIDENT ALIER AND MET WITH MOST MEMBERS CONFIDENTIAL

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LOCAL CABINET AS WELL AS VOLAG REPS. FOLLOWING ARE GENERAL IMPRESSIONS TRIP WHICH WILL BE SUPPLEMENTED BY OTHER

REPORTING ON SPECIFIC SUBJECTS.

3. POLITICAL: AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED AFTER ORGANIZWCSON PERMANENT HIGH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (E.E. REGIONAL CABINET), EUPHORIA WHICH SURROUNDED CREATION AUTONOMY SOUTHERN REGION HAS BEEN REPLACED BY SOME FEELING OF LET-DOWN. KEY ACT IN THIS PROCESS WAS PRESIDENT NIMEIRI'S NOMINATION OF VICE PRESIDENT ALIER (WHO DID NOT STAND FOR ELECTION TO REGIONAL ASSEMBLY) AS HEAD NEW PERMANENT HEC. WHILE THIS IN FACT DONE BY NIMEIRI IN HIS CAPACITY AS HEAD SSU, IT WAS WIDELY INTERPRETED IN SOUTH AS INDICATION NORTH INTENDS CONTINUE IMPOSE TOP LEADERSHIP. MOST DAMAGING FROM STANDPOINT FUTURE NORTH/SOUTH COLLABORATION WAS ASSERTION ONE NON-CABINET SOURCE THAT SUDANESE EXILES WHO OPPOSE NIMEIRI HAVE CONTACTED SOME SOUTHERNERS WITH INTIMATIONS THEY FAVOR GREATER AUTONOMY AND FREEDOM FROM SOUTHERN REGION THAN AT PRESENT. NO EVIDENCE RESPONSIBLE SOUTHERNERES DESIRE ANYTHING BUT EFFECTIVE WORKING EXISTING AGREEMENT (AS THEY UNDERSTAND IT), BUT PROBLEM REMAINS DUE SOUTHERN HYPER-SUSPICION AND SENSITIVITY OF NORTH AT TIME AUTHORITIES IN KHARTOUM FOCUSSING ON ARAB AND OTHER REGIONAL ISSUES.

4. MILITARY: WHILE APPARENTLY SOME NORTHERN TROOPS MAY HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN SINCE HEIGHT TROUBLES, NUMBER SOURCES COMPLAINED THAT NORTHERN TROOPS STILL MUCH IN EVIDENCE ALLEGEDLY IN EXCESS NUMBERS PROVIDED UNDER ADDIS ACCORDS (I.E. 6000 NORTHERN TROOPS AND 6000 SOUTHERN EX-ANYANYA). DESPITE EFFORTS BY REGIONAL AUTHORITIES, MANY NORTHERN UNITS AND SOME EX-ANYANYA TROOPS CONTINUE OCCUPY SCHOOLS AND OTHER FACILITIES BADLY NEEDED FOR EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES. TWO OF MAJOR NORTHERN COMMANDERS IN SOUTH WERE IN PROCESS BEING RELIEVED BY SOUTHERN OFFICERS AND EXPERIMENT REPORTED CURRENTLY UNDER WAY IN YEI INVOLVING INTEGRATION OF NORTH/SOUTH TROOPS AT PLATOON LEVEL. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, INTEGRATION NORTHERN UNITS;WITH ANYANYA APPEARS HAVE MADE LITTLE PROGRESS. ADDITIONALLY, ANYANYA REMAIN MORE*POORLY ARMED AND MEANLY QUARTERED THAN NORTHERN UNITS. THERE IS SOME SOU*HERN FEELING THAT, IF NORTH WERE SINCERE IN DESIR*

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GIVE SOUTH GREATER AUTONOMY, THESE PROBLEMS WOULD HAVE RECEIVED GREATER ATTENTION. HOWEVER IT PROBABLY NOT EAST FOR EVEN NIMEIRI MOVE HIS ARMY AROUND RAPIDLY, NOTABLY TO LESS COMFORTABLE QUARTERS, AGAINST WISHES LOCAL COMMANDERS. MOREOVER, IF HE FEELS THERE IS ANY POSSIBLILY EXILE EXPLOITATION NORTH/SOUTH DIFFERENCES, HE MAY REGARD CONTINUED PRESENCE NORTHERN UNITS AS PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED AS ESSENTIAL.

5. AS FURTHER POSSIBLE AVENUE CIRCUMVENT ADDIS ABABA AGREEMENT, SOUTHERNERS NOTE THAT THERE IS NO RPT NO

REGIONAL SSU POLITBUREAU. SINCE SSU THEORETICALLY IS THE KEY ELEMENT IN ORDAINING AND DIRECTING SUDANESE POLICIES, FACT THAT CHAIN OF COMMAND IN SSU IS FROM JUBA COMMISSIONER TO SSU POLIT*UREAU KHA*TOUM IS SOMEWHAT GALLING, EVEN THOUGH FIVE MEMBERS REGIONAL HEC ARE ALSO POLITBUREAU MEMBERS.

6. INTEGRATION: WHILE SOUTHERN SUSPICIONS THUS HARDLY DEAD, REGIONAL MINISTRIES BEGINNING FUNCTION NORMALLY WITHIN ACCEPTED CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS. ADDIS AGREEMENT TECHNICALLY PART SUDANESE CONSTITUTION, BUT REGIONAL MIN ADMIN/LEGAL AFFAIRS OLWAK (A LAWYER) TOLD ME THAT ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CENTRAL CONSTITUTION AND REGIONAL CONSTITUTION WOULD BE RESOLVED ON BASIS POLITICAL, NOT LEGAL, DECISIONS. THIS UNDERLINES IMPORTANCE IN MAKING SYSTEM WORK OF INTER-PLAY KEY PERSONALITIES, NOTABLY NIMEIRI AND ALIER. ON BASIS BRIEF MEETIN, LATTER SEEMS SELF-CONTAINED, QUIET AND UNLIKELY MAKE DIFFICULTIES FOR KHARTOUM.

7. ONE ASPECT INTEGRATION IS FACT THAT LOCAL COMMERCE IN SOUTH REMAINS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN HANDS NORTHERN TRADERS. WHILE SUDANES COMMERCIAL LAW THEORETICALLY RULES OUT DISCRIMINATION AS BETWEEN ETHNIC GROUPSJN OLWAK INDICATED ALL HE ABLE DO IS ADVISE HIS COLLEAGUES THAT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST NORTHERNERS SHOULD BE KEP TO MINIMUM. IN PRACTICE, I WOULD ASSUME DESPERATE SOUTHERN NEED FOR EXPERIENCED MERCHANTS AND ABSENCE TRAINED *OUTHERNE * LIKELY ASSURE CONTINUING ROLE NORTHERN TRADERS FOR CONSIDERABLE PERIOD, BUT THERE WILL BE FRICTIONS.

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8. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. DIFFICULTIES DUE SOUTHERN REGION'S ENDEMIC INTERNAL TRANSPORT PROBLEMS AND REMOTENESS FROM PORT FACILITIES HAVE BEEN COMPLICATED BY CURRENT FUEL SHORTAGES. NUMBER FACTORIES AND WATER DISTRIBUTION SCHEMES NOT FUNCTIONING DUE ABSENCE DIESEL FOR GENERATORS. UNHCR AND VOLAGS HAVE OVER PAST YEAR OBTAINED SOME SUCH FUEL VIA UGANDA BUT LATTER REPORTEDLY NOW PERMITTING NO FUEL WHICH ENTERS UGANDA TO LEAVE. EFFORTS MAY BE MADE VIA KHARTOUM DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS OBTAIN FUEL ZAIRE, UGANDA OR KENYA, BUT OUTLOOK HIGHLY UNCERTAIN.

9. REGUGEES: BULK REFUGEES HAVE RETURNED AND APPRENTLY BEING SUCCESFULLY RE-ABSORBED IN REGIONAL LIFE. HOWEVER, THERE STILL LARGE NUMBER UGANDA, VARIOUSLY ESTIMATED FROM 30-50,000, MANY WHOM EXPECTED RETURN THIS SPRING. COMMISSIONER GENERAL REFUGEE RELIEF M'BORO ASSERTED FY 74 PL 480 PROGRAM VOLAGS WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT MEET NEED. DETAILS THIS QUESTION SUBJECT SEPARATE MESSAGE.

10. COMMENT: SOUTHER REGION IMPRESSES INITIAL VISITOR AS HAVING CONSIDERABLE AGRICULTURAL AND EVEN HYDRO-ELECTRIC POSSIBILITIES. AREA'S CHIEF DRAWBACKS ARE ITS ENDEMIC HEALTH PROBLEMS (MALARIA, SLEEPING SICKNESS, INTESTINAL DISORDERS), FUEL SHORTAGES AND CONTINUED TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES. WHILE PRESIDENT NIMEIRI REMAINS POPULAR AS SYMBOL ACHIEVEMENT REGIONAL'S AUTONOMY, HIS LUSTER HAS BEEN DIMMED BY DEVELOPMENTS NOTED. AT SAME TIME, BELIEVE THIS SITUATION SHOULD BE REGARDED MORE IN NATURE GROWING PAINS IN EVOLUTION PERMANENT RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CENTRAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES THAN ASOTARBINGER MAJOR STORM CLOUDS AHEAD.

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